

EDUCATION, CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting of the Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday, 13 July 2023 at 11.00 am at the Executive Meeting Room, Guildhall

Present

Councillor Brian Madgwick (in the Chair)
Councillors Stuart Brown
Peter Candlish

24. Apologies for absence (AI 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brent, Oliver and Valley. Apologies were also received from Rob Sanders and Helen Reeder.

25. Declarations of interest (AI 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

26. Minutes of previous meeting - 22 March 2023 (AI 3)

The Panel noted the minutes of the previous meeting from 22 March 2023.

27. Review into education, employment and training opportunities for care experienced young people - draft scoping document (AI 4)

Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director of Children, Families and Education gave a summary of the draft scoping document for the review into education, employment and training opportunities for our care experienced young adults.

Members noted that the work programme for topics for the themed panels would be considered by the Scrutiny Management Panel at their meeting on 26 July.

Members agreed the scoping document with the following minor amendments:

Topic title to be amended to: education, employment and training opportunities for our care experienced young adults aged 18-25.

Shaping Portsmouth to be added to the list of witnesses for the review.

The panel heard from Keely Mitchell, Head of Service Adolescents and Young Adults who briefly summarised her background paper. She explained that the term care experienced young adults referred to those young adults aged between 18 and 25 who had been looked after by the local authority. Our young people have great skills and the aim is to help them develop these

skills through access to education, apprenticeships or work. Some of these young people will have had very difficult experiences so it was vital that the local authority as the corporate parent helps and creates opportunities for them and supports them. The local authority also supports young people who are seeking asylum. Personal Advisors (PAs) support our care experienced young people who are keen to get young people into apprenticeships. She gave an example of one young person who was having trouble with his apprenticeship and the Personal Advisor was going to his house each day to encourage him to attend. Ms Mitchell added that she had heard today that one of their young people had received a first at university which was a great achievement.

The panel also heard from Tina Henley, Head of the Virtual School & College. She explained that the Virtual School & College works with young people from the age of 4 up to the age 18 and this would encompass the start of the care experienced journey. In this context it is the support that the Virtual School & College provide for Year 12s and 13s that is most relevant. Each young person has a personal opportunity plan (POP) meeting to discuss their education, employment or training. Where they are not in education, employment or training (NEET) the Virtual School & College works with the Post-16 Skills Manager to formulate an action plan to support them to go back into education, employment or training (EET). In the current Year 12 cohort there are 64 young people including 22 young people seeking asylum. 8 of these are NEET which includes one new Mum; all but one of these have plans for September. In Year 13 there are 53 students including 14 young people seeking asylum. 14 of these are NEET including 2 new Mums, 4 actively working with career and progression advisers, 3 looking for apprenticeships, 3 looking for employment and 2 with limited engagement. Ms Henley said that they are desperate for more apprenticeships in the city. The lived experiences and past traumas of our young people mean it can be much more difficult to access opportunities and we need to ensure we provide the support they need to address individual needs they have that result from this. We can provide opportunities and support to turn their lives around and move forward.

The young people supported by the Virtual School & College have a range of education experiences. Some are doing the level 3 programmes (A levels), some are doing the entry level programmes, some are doing the ESOL programmes (English as a second language). There are several positive stories this year. Two students applied to university and were accepted and another young person who has deferred their application to university as they want travel and then join the Royal Marines. There are two young people starting a level 4 apprenticeship and one young person restarting the second year of their A level programme.

In response to questions officers advised that:

- There are 375 care experienced young people (aged 18-25), 171 are NEET. The Virtual School & College supports 471 students and will slightly overlap with this number.

- With regard to a percentage of care experienced young adults who go into work over the past five years, Ms Mitchell said she would have to come back with those figures.
- The council has a corporate responsibility to support care experienced young adults and give them the best possible chance of success. There are cases where it looks like they would find it difficult to access work, but with the right support and encouragement it is often possible to do just that.
- Officers would like to develop more apprenticeships and opportunities for young people as there are not enough in the city. The thoughts and input of members on how best to do that would be welcomed. Officers would like to develop the Employability Academy to help care experienced young adults become work ready.
- There are some great starting offers from Shaping Portsmouth and Solent LEP but more is needed. There is no longer any funding for traineeships which is a pre apprenticeship year and which helps a lot of young people become work ready. The council is now looking to see if it can provide these opportunities working with our partners.
- There are many foster carers in the city and the priority is to have young adults cared for by families. There are a small number of children cared for in children's homes. When children reach 18, some will stay with foster families, and some move into semi supported living accommodation to support them to live independently.
- In September a supported internship programme at the Council is starting for young people with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) where they get a year working and learning before they move into employment. Officers would like to extend this model to our care experienced young people.
- The increase in NEET percentages as young people get older is a trend. However, covid has exacerbated this issue and learning opportunities have been lost.
- There is a grant for employers who take on care experienced young adults into their workplace for apprenticeships. This grant needs to be promoted further as it gives employers that extra support. It is also vital that employers have the right training to support the young people. This is something that Shaping Portsmouth are working on.
- The service is run through the Youth Hub which was a joint project with the DWP. The DWP has now pulled back from that funding. There is an advisor from the Virtual School & College so it is seamless in support. The PAs are qualified careers advisors within the youth hub setting.
- The cohort of the Virtual School & College varies each year in terms of their strengths and challenges so their pathways will be very different in terms of their level of education. Each year is tracked and monitored but that only goes up to the end of year 13. The NEET figures are consistent across the years.
- The Virtual School & College knows daily where their young people are and if they have dropped out of education how to support them. After they leave Year 13 the young people are tracked through the Employability Academy.
- The Employability Academy offers a variety of different opportunities as the young adults all have different strengths and have different

experiences and needs. As a city we contract with many different services so there is the potential to create many different opportunities and it was hoped to maximise this.

- Officers are doing everything they can with the resources they have to improve outcomes for care experienced young adults. This is a corporate responsibility and all directorates within the Council need to support this work. This also applies to all the partners the Council works with to ensure they are making the most of the opportunities available.
- Personal Advisors work hard to get young adults into stable housing and officers work with housing colleagues closely. Housing is a key factor to ensuring that care experienced young adults have the best start and officers said they could provide some data about housing prior to the next meeting.

Officers also said they would prepare some further background documents for members prior to the next meeting.

The next meeting would take place in September and it was agreed this would be an evening meeting to allow for maximum attendance of the witnesses. The date would be circulated by email in due course.

Draft meetings schedule

September

- Care experienced young people
- Foster carers
- Flying Solo charity
- Personal Advisors
- Ann-Marie O'Brien

October/November meeting (date TBC) Education and training providers

- City of Portsmouth College
- Prince's Trust
- Abri
- Reach 4 Skills
- Learning Skills Solutions
- University of Portsmouth

December/January meeting

- DWP/Jobcentre
- Shaping Portsmouth

The meeting concluded at 12.07 pm.

Councillor Brian Madgwick
Chair